

Message Text

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10

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 INSE-00

ABF-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

SCA-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 AID-05 /089 W
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O P 131224Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8588

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1395

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

REF: (A) GENEVA 998 (B) ATHENS 1091 (C) GENEVA 730 (D) STATE 25671
(E) BEIRUT 1010

1. UNHCR OFFICIALS JAEGER AND RIZVI DISCUSSED QUESTION OF
ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEE PROCESSING WITH EMBASSY ON
FEB 11 AND EMPHASIZED DESIRE FOR PROCESSING TO COMMENCE AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY SO THAT 200 NUMBERS TO BE MADE
AVAILABLE BY INS FOR FEBRUARY WILL NOT BE LOST.

2. JAEGER SPECIFICALLY PROPOSED THAT PROCESSING BEGIN AT
BEIRUT OF AT LEAST FIRST 200 FAMILY HEADS PLUS DEPENDENTS SINCE
FIRST, TIME WOULD BE LOST IF PROCESSING STARTS ONLY AFTER
REFUGEES CAN BE MOVED TO ANOTHER LOCATION AND, SECOND, ANY
MOVEMENT WOULD INVOLVE PROBLEMS OF FINDING ADEQUATE HOUSING
AND MAINTENANCE FOR LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE TO SAY NOTHING OF
REQUIREMENT FOR CONSENT OF GOVERNMENT OF ALTERNATIVE LOCA-
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TION FOR ENTRY OF APPLICANTS. HE THOUGHT THAT THIS WOULD

GIVE TIME FOR ARRANGEMENTS TO BE COMPLETED FOR SUBSEQUENT MOVE OF FURTHER REFUGEES TO ALTERNATE PROCESSING LOCATION.

3. HE SAID THAT HIS CONCLUSION AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL PERSONALITIES WAS THAT LEBANESE WOULD WELCOME ANY EFFORTS TO ASSIST THESE REFUGEES IN LEAVING LEBANON. HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE ANY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS.

4. UNCHR LEBANON REPRESENTATIVE JAHN USED FIGURE OF 2,250 POTENTIAL APPLICANTS. EMBASSY BELIEVES THESE INCLUDE APPROXIMATELY 415 FAMILY HEADS AND 1,435 DEPENDENTS REGISTERED WITH WCC (FIGURES REPORTED REFTEL B) PLUS SEVERAL HUNDRED ADDITIONAL APPLICANTS REGISTERED WITH PONTIFICAL MISSION, BEIRUT. EMBASSY HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE OBTAIN EXACT FIGURES ON REGISTRANTS FROM PONTIFICAL MISSION.

5. COMMENT: UNHCR POSITION AS CONVEYED BY JAEGER AGREES WITH USG POSITION TO MOVE PROMPTLY ON START OF PROCESSING. EMBASSY APPRECIATES DIFFICULTIES AND DELAYS WHICH UNHCR FORESEES IN ARRANGING MOVEMENT OF THIS LARGE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, EMPHASIZED THAT ANY THOUGHT OF PROCESSING IN LEBANON MUST ACCEPT POSSIBILITY OF SUDDEN CURTAILMENT OF OPERATION SHOULD SECURITY SITUATION SHOW DETERIORATION.

6. EMBASSY VIEWS ON REFUGEE QUESTION REPORTED IN REFTEL E. IF DEPARTMENT AND INS AGREE TO COMMENCEMENT OF REFUGEE PROCESSING AT BEIRUT, EMBASSY IS PREPARED IMPLEMENT PROGRAM WITHOUT DELAY. PRESENT SECURITY SITUATION WOULD ALLOW APPLICANTS TO REACH VOLAG, MEDICAL EXAMINER AND EMBASSY IN RELATIVE SAFETY AND WOULD PERMIT PROCESSING BY OFFICE STAFF. AS EVENTS OF PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAVE SHOWN, HOWEVER, SECURITY SITUATION IN BEIRUT IS LIABLE TO CHANGE AT SHORT NOTICE.

7. ALL VISA MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS IN BEIRUT ARE COMPLETED AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL. WE HAVE NO PRESENT REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HOSPITAL MIGHT NOT BE ABLE HANDLE ON SHORT-TERM BASIS THAT LARGE INCREASE IN EXAMINATIONS
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WHICH REFUGEE PROGRAM IN BEIRUT WOULD ENTAIL.

8. AT PRESENT EMBASSY BEIRUT HAS NEITHER CONSULAR OFFICER WHO CAN BE SPARED TO ASSIST REFUGEE PROGRAM NOR FSLs WITH VISA EXPERIENCE WHO CAN UNDERTAKE NON-PREFERENCE IV ISSUANCE. ANY REFUGEE PROGRAM IN BEIRUT WOULD REQUIRE THEREFORE NOT ONLY INS PERSONNEL BUT ONE

AMERICAN CONSULAR OFFICER (PERHAPS FSO DONALD SUTTER, BEIRUT EVACUEE NOW IN FRANKFURT, COULD RETURN FOR THIS PURPOSE). SOME NON-CONSULAR EMBASSY FSLs, THE WORK OF WHOSE SECTIONS HAS BEEN REDUCED BY DISTURBANCES IN LEBANON AND EVACUATION OF AMERICAN STAFF, WOULD PROBABLY BE ABLE ASSIST WITH IV ISSUANCE, BUT WE EMPHASIZE THEIR LACK OF VISA EXPERIENCE.

9. WHILE UNHCR HAS OFFICIALLY PROPOSED PROCESSING OF ONLY FIRST 200 FAMILIES IN BEIRUT, EMBASSY SEES SOME INEVITABLE PROCEDURAL INCONVENIENCE IN TRANSFER OF OPERATION TO ANOTHER LOCATION FOR SUBSEQUENT PROCESSING. WE ALSO FORESEE LIKELIHOOD THAT IF FIRST GROUP PROCESSING PROCEEDS SMOOTHLY AND IF SECURITY SITUATION REMAINS PROMISING, PROPOSAL MIGHT BE MADE LATER TO COMPLETE PROCESSING HERE.

10. AS ADDRESSEES AWARE, EMBASSY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT PROCESSING FROM THE BEGINNING TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE LEBANON. HOWEVER, SINCE NO ARRANGEMENTS FOR MOVING REFUGEES HAVE YET BEEN MADE AND SINCE ALL PARTIES APPEAR AGREED THAT PROCESSING SHOULD BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND THAT PROCESSING IN BEIRUT APPEARS MOST PRACTICAL AT THE PRESENT MOMENT, WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO ACTIVATION OF PROGRAM IF DEPARTMENT AND INS AGREE TO UNHCR PROPOSAL.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: WE PRESUME THAT REFTEL A WAS SE X ON BASIS BELIEF THAT REFUGEE PROCESSING WOULD PROBABLY BEGIN IN ATHENS. EMBASSY BEIRUT REQUESTS THAT DEPARTMENT AND INS DECIDE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WHETHER BEIRUT PROCESSING IS NEVERTHELESS ACCEPTABLE AND ADVISE EMBASSY SO THAT WE CAN BE PREPARED TO MEET DEMANDS.

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12. IN EVENTS OF FAVORABLE DECISION, WE FORESEE PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS FOR PR XRAM AS FOLLOWS: 1 INS OFFICER PLUS WHATEVER OTHER EXPERIENCED STAFF INS WOULD REQUIRE FOR ITS WORK; 1 CONSULAR OFFICER TO OVERSEE IV ISSUANCE TO REFUGEE DEPENDENTS. ADDITIONALLY, ANY EXPERIENCED CLERICAL ASSISTANCE WHICH MIGHT BE PROVIDED TO HELP WITH IV ISSUANCE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, POLICIES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT01395
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760057-0456
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760253/aaaabrtr.tel
Line Count: 163
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ORM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 GENEVA 998, 76 ATHENS 1091, 76 GENEVA 730, 76 STATE 25671
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 APR 2004 by woolfhd>; APPROVED <18 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSYRIAN AND ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON
TAGS: SREF, LE, UNHCR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006